



While thousands of jobs have been created in the Salem area since our economic recovery began two years ago, the unemployment rate for Marion and Polk counties remains at 7%. Although the economy is growing, continued action must be taken to create jobs and restore the economy. Elected officials must continue to demonstrate leadership in economic development, and partnerships must be formed between businesses, community leaders, and all levels of government to seek ways we can work together to build a better economy.

In that spirit, this report outlines strategies to improve economic health of Marion and Polk counties in both the short-term and long-term. These initiatives fall under ten broad strategies that help provide the foundation for a strong economy and a livable community.

- Complete development projects that will attract new businesses and visitors;
- Improve the region's transportation system;
- Provide a supply of land for industrial development;
- Build a skilled workforce through education and job training programs;
- Invest in research and development;
- Maintain stable, low-cost energy supplies;
- Address public safety challenges;
- Promote tourism in the Mid-Willamette Valley;
- Promote agriculture and food processing;
- Maintain a strong manufacturing sector.

Quality educational institutions, from grade schools through graduate schools, and job training opportunities for workers create a skilled workforce that fosters innovation, increases productivity, and attracts businesses to our community. A strong public safety system allows our citizens and businesses to operate without fear and prevents losses due to crime. Transportation infrastructure helps move goods to and from the market and provides residents the ability to commute to work safely and quickly. Stable and low-cost energy literally fuels the economy's growth, and a supply of buildable industrial land is required for sustained growth. Out-of-state visitors stimulate the economy by spending money at local businesses, and local agricultural products are sold worldwide, bringing new money into the region.

The authors of this economic development agenda do not share party affiliation. We do not always agree on every issue, but we do agree that we must find areas of common ground and work together to achieve the goals on which we can agree. Consequently, we sought to bridge the partisan gap by building a bipartisan economic development agenda that attempts to transcend differences in political ideology.

We recognize that government doesn't create jobs; private sector businesses do. While

government can harm the economy through ill-advised policies, it can also take actions that help create jobs and set the economy on a path of stability and growth. The strategies outlined here are designed with that in mind and strive to let businesses grow and prosper by setting the conditions for economic development and giving businesses a helping hand.

While this plan does not constitute the official policy of any government, we intend it to demonstrate their commitment to work with others to turn these ideas into reality. We view this blueprint as a starting point for discussion with regional stakeholders, and we pledge to continue working with businesses, workers, community leaders, and government officials to refine and improve these strategies as we continue implementing them.

In the two years since we released the initial draft of this plan, significant progress has been made, both in implementing the strategies it contains and in the more fundamental matter of economic recovery. While the region has made progress, we are not content to rest on our accomplishments. Building a strong local economy will require sustained efforts.

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